

Mothers Against Drunk Driving

San Diego City Attorney Casey Gwinn

MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW INITIATIVE AGAINST DRUNK DRIVING LAUNCHED

City Attorney Gwinn and MADD Join Forces to fight Drunk Driving as Deadly Holiday Season Begins

For the first time in a decade, alcohol-related traffic fatalities and injuries increased in San Diego County. Last year, 105 people were killed and 2,997 were injured in impaired driving crashes - a 12% increase from 1995. The City Attorney's Office and MADD have joined forces to announce a new tough initiative to send a "wake up" call to the community that drunk driving is still a serious and dangerous crime.

"Over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend, four individuals died in San Diego County due to alcohol-related traffic collisions," said City Attorney Casey Gwinn. "As far as we're concerned, that's four too many. As we approach this festive time of year, it's especially important that the residents of San Diego heed our warning -- drunk driving is a serious and dangerous crime and we will prosecute and seek jail time for anyone arrested for this offense," said Gwinn.

Gwinn announced today that he has instituted a policy on DUI's that includes no reductions on DUI cases brought to his office for prosecution. "We've looked at our statistics and in the City of San Diego we have the toughest sentencing of DUI offenses in the County. But as of today, we're getting even tougher. If you're charged with a DUI, we'll prove you guilty and you'll go to jail," said Gwinn.

"MADD is extremely concerned about this rise in alcohol-related traffic fatalities and injuries," said Victoria C. Gilner, President, MADD San Diego. "We're pleased to join and fully support the City Attorney in upholding these new prosecution guidelines," she said.

"The message beginning this holiday season is simple: Don't drink and drive -- or you'll do the time," added Gwinn.

The City Attorney will discuss an initiative in partnership with the Sheriff to ensure that jail sentences for first-time and repeat offenders will result in actual jail time. Over the last 10 years, due to jail overcrowding and an ACLU lawsuit, a court order has limited the number of criminals who can be held in the County jail system. The result has been that criminal DUI defendants receiving jail sentences of 45 days custody or less rarely spend even a single day in jail. Most sentences are converted to public work service in the community rather than any time behind bars.

Gwinn will also propose new legislation to impound the vehicles of repeat-DUI offenders. "We have seen tremendous success in taking vehicles from drivers with suspended licenses," said Gwinn. "Now, we need to take the cars from those most likely to kill on the roads of our County," he concluded.

MADD and the City Attorney's Office will make this announcement at a press conference at 10:00am, Thursday, December 4, 1997, at the San Diego Police Department, Traffic Division, 9265 Aero Drive, San Diego.

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